



DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY,
A PROGRAM OFFICE WITHIN VA'S OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMINISTRATION

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<<http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/daw.htm>>

MARCH/APRIL 2008

VA BEST PRACTICES

Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center's EEO Committee Sponsors Education Assistance Program

In 1997, employees of the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona, told the medical center's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Advisory Committee that it seemed nearly impossible to achieve higher grade positions without an education. When asked why they did not use the VA education reimbursement program to take higher-education classes, employees pointed out that, with their lower grade salaries, they did not have the luxury of being able to pay for a course and then to wait for reimbursement.

The medical center's EEO Program Manager and the EEO Advisory Committee took a long hard look at the Annual Affirmative Employment Program Accomplishment Report (the Federal Agency Annual EEO Program Status Report). This report confirmed that a large number of minority employees existed in lower grade positions, while there were very few General Schedule

(GS) employees at grades GS-9 and above.

In an effort to increase educational opportunities for medical center employees, the EEO Advisory Committee members came up with the EEO Education Assistance Program. The program provides funds to assist permanent employees at the GS-9 level and below—and Wage Grade (WG) employees at the WG-4 level and below—to pay for training or educational courses either at local community schools, colleges and universities, or through approved correspondence courses. Funds are advanced to employees to pay for tuition, books, and laboratory fees for one or two approved courses per semester in the amount of actual expense incurred by employee, up to \$500.

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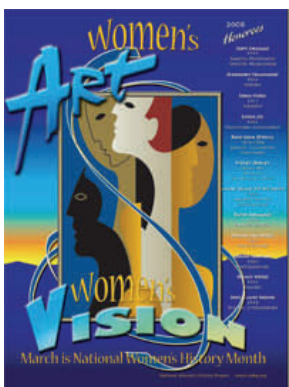
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CELEBRATE!

National Women's History Month

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating Women's History Month during March. National Women's History Month grew from an effort to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women in American history.

In 1980, President Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation calling on the American people to remember the



contributions of women. By 1987, fourteen governors had declared March as Women's History Month and, that same year, Congress and the President followed by declaring March as National Women's History Month.

To honor the originality, beauty, imagination, and multiple dimensions of women's lives, the 2008 National Women's History Project theme for the observation is "Women's Art: Women's Vision."

Overall, VA employment of women in permanent positions grew to 58.93 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2007. Also in FY 2007, women in the leadership pipeline grew to 45.58 percent, women in the SES grew to 30.43 percent, and the number of female veterans grew to 7.42 percent. Managers and supervisors are encouraged to plan observance activities this month—and throughout the year—to honor these women for delivering vital health care, benefits, memorial services of our Nation's veterans and their families. To learn more about VA's National Women's Program, contact **Wanda J. Jones** at <wanda.jones@va.gov>. ■

BOOKMARKS

- ▶ **Asian Women in Business**
www.awib.org
- ▶ **Association for Women in Science**
www.awis.org
- ▶ **Business and Professional Women/USA**
www.bpusa.org
- ▶ **Federally Employed Women**
www.few.org
- ▶ **League of United Latin American Citizens**
www.lulac.org
- ▶ **Proyecto Vision**
www.proyectovision.net
- ▶ **The Black Women's Agenda**
www.blackwomensagenda.org
- ▶ **U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau**
www.dol.gov/wb
- ▶ **Women Work! The National Network of Women's Employment**
www.womenwork.org

Contact information for other diversity-related organizations can be found on the DM&EEO Web site at:
www.va.gov/dmeeo/org

FIELD NOTES

News You Can Use

CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine Survey
CAREERS & the disABLED magazine recently conducted its 17th Annual Reader Survey. Culled from the responses of readers who comprise a national sampling of undergraduate and graduate students on community college and four-year university campuses and entry-level and experienced workers, this year's survey asked respondents to advise employers in both the corporate and government sectors how they need to recruit, hire, and promote this underutilized sector of the working population. In addition, readers advise their contemporaries on how to implement their career-search strategies. Readers of *CAREERS & the disABLED* magazine were also asked to name the employers, both in the private and public sectors, for whom they would most like to work (or whom they believe would provide a progressive environment for people with disabilities). The Department of Veterans Affairs ranked number seven among Federal agencies with regard to the best places to work for people with disabilities. For more information, visit www.eop.com/cdto50.html.

EEOC Report

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued a comprehensive report addressing strategies to reverse the declining participation rate of Federal employees with targeted disabilities. Targeted disabilities include deafness, blindness, missing extremities, partial or complete paralysis, convulsive disorders,

mental retardation, mental illness, and distortion of the limb and/or spine. The report provides recommendations on how Federal agencies can increase their targeted disability workforce. According to the report, the Department of Veterans Affairs has the second highest percentage of employees with targeted disabilities. When compared to other Cabinet level departments, only the Department of Treasury ranks higher. However, EEOC has established a goal for all Federal agencies to achieve a two percent targeted disability employee population by the year 2011. Employees with targeted disabilities reflect 1.55 percent of VA's workforce and the Department has a long way to go to achieve this goal. For more information, contact **David Walton**, VA's national program manager for people with disabilities, at David.Walton@va.gov. The full text of the report, Improving the Participation Rate of People with Targeted Disabilities in the Federal Work Force, is available at www.eeoc.gov/federal/report/pwtd.html.

Intern Selection Process Underway

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities is accepting intern requests now through April 9, 2008. To post an intern request, log in at www.hnip.net/agency. For login information, contact **Noel Guerrero** at (202) 467-0893 or at nguerrero@hacu.net. For general questions, contact **Brenda A. Martin**, National Internship Program Coordinator, at (202) 461-4040 or brenda.martin@va.gov. ■

WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

Parental Leave, Parental Return

www.bnet.com/2406-13068_23-67271.html

Content: Parental leave isn't just for pregnant moms anymore. With new laws allowing greater flexibility, dads and adoptive parents are taking time off to bond with their babies—and companies are learning that it's good for business to encourage them. If you're about to add a new member to your family, check out BNET's helpful primer on what you need to know before you take parental leave. Concerned about re-entering the work world after your leave is over? BNET gathered real-life stories from five parents about how they negotiated the return to work. To help you navigate the trickier aspects of leave time, BNET researched the five biggest dangers of parental leave and how to avoid them. BNET also took a look at four companies known for family-friendly policies and what makes them stand out. And BNET asked Brandon Desch, human resources director at MarketTools, for tips on parental leave rights.

Must-See Features: Video: Your Parental Leave Rights. (The link to the video is on the bottom right side of the of the Web page listed above.) Under the Family and Medical Leave Act Act (Public Law 103-3; 29USC2601), most companies must grant expectant mothers and fathers up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave. Brandon Desch, a human resources director, explains how to have a successful leave by researching your rights and benefits—and putting them into play before, during, and after your parental leave.

Accessibility: No accessibility information offered.

Contact Info:

CNET Networks
235 Second Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
415-344-2000

VA DIVERSITY/EEO BEST PRACTICES

(Continued from page 1)

Each student is required to sign an agreement stating that he or she will abide by the requirements of the program to attend classes and to repay the agency if the course is not completed or if a passing grade is not achieved. An employee can use this program every semester repeatedly, if he or she successfully completes the course with a grade of C or better.

When the program was first announced it was well received by members of management and their employees. The EEO Advisory Committee (which is responsible for coordinating and advising on all matters pertaining to the program) uses a variety of communications media to get the word out about the program to medical center employees eligible for the program. Before the beginning of each fall and spring semester, information about the program is disseminated through e-mails, memoranda, and posters.

Although this fund is not a formal educational program for upward mobility and has no relation to any other established VA or Federal program, courses taken by employees who participate in this program reflect the employees' educational goals to refine skills for their current position or for promotion opportunities. Since the program's inception, approximately 250 employees have taken advantage of the funds offered through this program to enroll in courses that would assist them in their work with veterans, as well to complete requirements for a degree. On average, about 25 students use the EEO Education Assistance Program each semester.

For more information about the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center's EEO Education Assistance Program, contact **Roberto Peart**, EEO Program Manager, at (602) 277-5551 (ext. 6573) or at [<Roberto.Peart@va.gov>](mailto:Roberto.Peart@va.gov). ■

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT COORDINATION SERVICE (VECS)

VA Launches New Service to Aid in Recruiting Veterans

Of the 260,000 employees in VA's workforce, approximately 31 percent are veterans and 7.8 percent are service-connected disabled veterans. VA ranks first among non-Defense agencies in the hiring of disabled veterans and is second only to the Department of Defense in overall number of veterans in the workforce. VA is committed to hiring veterans as part of its strategy to meet current and future human capital needs of the organization, particularly amid the growing wave of Federal retirements.

In a 2006 memo from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs entitled, "Veterans: Getting the Preference They Have Earned," Human Resource (HR) offices VA-wide were asked to join an effort to make VA the leading agency in the employment of veterans. All HR offices were asked to designate an HR specialist as their Veteran Employment Coordinator (VEC) to help guide local efforts to attract and recruit veteran applicants for employment in VA's workforce.

In November 2007, VA announced plans to hire 10 full-time regional VECs to help meet the goal of increasing VA's veteran workforce. This announcement led to the development of the newly established Veterans Employment Coordination Service (VECS). VECS will manage regional VECs who will work collaboratively with local VECs to

provide direct hands-on assistance to veterans, particularly severely injured service members who want to return to the workforce after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

VECS will also work collaboratively with wounded transition units and regiments, transition centers, Veterans Service Organizations, VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program, and other veteran stakeholders to promote VA career opportunities to the veteran community. VECS is led by **Dennis May**, who was recently hired in VA after serving 26 years on active duty with the U.S. Air Force.

All veterans deserve VA's complete commitment to ensuring that they are afforded every opportunity to successfully enter the workforce and lead productive lives. Through the VECS initiative and by helping to ensure that managers and supervisors throughout VA are aware of special hiring authorities, VA will open the doors of opportunities to veteran employment.

Look for more information on VECS in the near future! For questions or concerns, contact Mr. May at (202) 461-5063; **Greg Alleyne**, Program Manager for the National Veterans Employment Program, at (202) 461-6997; or email the VECS Team at [<VECS@va.gov>](mailto:VECS@va.gov). ■

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Visit our **Web site**,
[<www.va.gov/dmeeo>](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo),
for additional staff
e-mail addresses.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Under Secretary for Health
Diversity Advisory Board
[<www.va.gov/diversity>](http://www.va.gov/diversity)

VA's Office of Human
Resources & Administration
[<www.va.gov/ofcadmin/portal>](http://www.va.gov/ofcadmin/portal)

VA's Office of Resolution
Management
[<www.va.gov/orm>](http://www.va.gov/orm)

VA's Office of Human
Resources Management
[<www.va.gov/ohrm>](http://www.va.gov/ohrm)

GOT NEWS?

We want to hear from you!
If you'd like to share your
story ideas, comments, or
suggestions,
please e-mail us at
[<dmeeo@va.gov>](mailto:dmeeo@va.gov)
with the words
DIVERSITY@WORK in the
subject line.

DM&EEO ON THE INTERNET [<www.va.gov/dmeeo>](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo)



The DM&EEO mission is to increase awareness and acceptance of diversity and to promote a flexible and inclusive work environment throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs. Our vision is of a work environment that fosters respect, fairness, and opportunity for all employees. Here's a sampling of online tools available that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ National Women's History Month, Deaf History Month, and other special observance resources.
- ▶ Events, conferences, conventions, and programs.
- ▶ Links to professional and community organizations.

DM&EEO IN YOUR E-MAIL INBOX

Once a week, DM&EEO sends out *NewsLink*, an e-mail message with annotated links to current news items and other information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusion. For a FREE subscription to this weekly electronic news service, e-mail us at [<dmeeo@va.gov>](mailto:dmeeo@va.gov) with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line. You can find a current copy of *NewsLink* on the DM&EEO Web site at this address:
[<www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/newslink.htm>](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/newslink.htm).

DM&EEO ON YOUR TV SCREEN (OR PC MONITOR)

Diversity News is a monthly video program produced by the VACO Broadcasting Center for DM&EEO. Each program runs for a month, immediately following VA News. A copy of each program will be placed on the DM&EEO Web site (when the files become available) at this address: [<www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/diversitynews.htm>](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/diversitynews.htm).

FROM THE 2008 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

[<www.va.gov/dmeeo/calendar>](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/calendar)

MARCH

National Women's History Month
Irish-American Heritage Month

2008 DeafNation Expo
March 1; Austin, TX
[<www.deafnation.com>](http://www.deafnation.com)

NCLR Capital Awards
March 4; Washington, DC
[<www.nclr.org>](http://www.nclr.org)

International Women's Day
March 8

Technology and Persons with Disabilities
Conference
March 10–15; Los Angeles, CA
[<www.csun.edu/cod/conf/2008>](http://www.csun.edu/cod/conf/2008)

Deaf History Month
March 13–April 15

CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine Career
Expo For People With Disabilities
March 19; New York, NY
[<www.eop.com>](http://www.eop.com)

Abilities Expo

March 28–30; Edison, NJ
[<www.abilitiesexpo.com>](http://www.abilitiesexpo.com)

APRIL

Great Place to Work Conference
April 2–4; St. Louis, MO
[<www.greatplacetowork-conference.com>](http://www.greatplacetowork-conference.com)

HACU Annual National Capitol Forum on
Hispanic Higher Education
April 13–15; Washington, DC
[<www.hacu.net>](http://www.hacu.net)

Pacific Rim Conference on Disabilities
April 14–15; Waikiki, HI
[<www.pacrim.hawaii.edu>](http://www.pacrim.hawaii.edu)

Annual National Image, Inc. Conference &
Exposition
April 14–18; Las Vegas, NV
[<www.nationalimageinc.org>](http://www.nationalimageinc.org)

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work
April 24

The Summit on Leading Diversity
April 28–30; Atlanta, GA
[<www.linkageinc.com>](http://www.linkageinc.com)